

APPENDIX B: AN ABBREVIATED MILITARY DICTIONARY

This modest dictionary has been compiled for interpreters and others who may have had no previous exposure to military terms.¹

adjutant – a staff officer in charge of and responsible for administrative functions within the unit, including correspondence and records.

adjutant general – the adjutant of a division, corps, or army. (The Adjutant General, U.S. Army, in the War Department, was the chief administrative officer for the Army.)

aide-de-camp – a member of the personal staff of a general officer, acting as his confidential assistant.

arm – one of those branches of the Army organized, trained, equipped, and employed principally for combat and engaged in direct combat. In the "old" Army – infantry, artillery, and cavalry. Later, air service/air corps. In the modern Army – infantry, artillery, and armor. (The Corps of Engineers and the Chemical Corps are referred to both as arms and technical services. Usually listed as the Combat Arms.)

army – the largest tactical unit in the military forces of the United States. Larger tactical commands are formed by grouping two or more armies into an *army group*. Following World War II the numbered armies of the U.S. Army were six, including the Sixth U.S. Army headquartered at the Presidio of San Francisco. The "United States Army" is composed of the nation's ground forces, as opposed to the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and the U.S. Air Force.

arsenal – a building or establishment for manufacturing, storing, repairing, and issuing arms and ammunition.

1. The definitions have been adapted from Thomas Wilhelm, *A Military Dictionary and Gazetteer* (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly, 1881); Frank Gaynor, ed., *The New Military and Naval Dictionary* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951); and Maurice Matloff, gen. ed., *American Military History* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969).

artillery – (1) all guns heavier, of larger caliber, and longer range than a machine gun; (2) all the ammunition, supplies, and equipment required for firing such guns; (3) the personnel trained and employed to fire such guns; (4) the science, art, act, and process of firing such guns.

barbette – a base or support (such as a platform, a carriage, etc.) on which a gun is mounted for firing over a wall or breastwork.

barbette tier – the top level, or roof, at the fort at Fort Point on which guns were mounted.

battalion – a tactical unit composed of a headquarters and two or more companies or batteries.

battery – (1) a group of guns, mortars, artillery pieces, etc., placed under one tactical commander in a certain area. (2) a unit in the artillery branch similar to a company in the infantry or a troop in the cavalry.

breech – the rear part of the bore of a gun; specifically, the opening where the projectile is inserted in the bore of a breech-loading gun.

brevet commission – an honorary rank given to an officer in an age before medals became common, for valor in combat or for long and meritorious service, that was one or more ranks above an officer's actual rank for which he was paid. An officer might be given a single brevet, say a captain being brevetted major, or he might be brevetted all the way to brigadier general. He was entitled to be addressed by his highest brevet rank, yet in actual authority and pay he remained a captain commanding a company. Separate brevet series applied to the Regular Army and the wartime volunteer forces. For example, during the Mexican and Civil wars, a Regular Army officer serving in a volunteer regiment might receive brevets in both the Regular Army and in the wartime volunteer army. Brevet rank could be used as actual rank (with appropriate pay) only by direction of the President or in certain other special circumstances. Brevet rank was discontinued around the end of the 19th century and the awarding of medals eventually replaced brevet rank.

caliber – (1) the diameter of the bore of a gun; (2) diameter of a projectile; (3) unit of measurement used to express the length of the bore of a gun or mortar. (Number of calibers was found by dividing the length of the bore by the diameter. A gun having a 40-foot bore in length and 12 inches in diameter is said to be 40 calibers long.)

casemate – a bombproof structure. Originally proof against mortar shells; later, against explosives dropped by aircraft.

cavalry – troops trained, equipped, and armed to march, maneuver, and fight on horseback.

chief of staff – the senior officer on the staff of a command or the personal staff of a commanding general, who acts as the principal advisor to the commanding officer and coordinates the activities of the various staff sections of a division or higher level.

coast artillery – the Coast Artillery Corps and the coastal armament. Until 1901, Artillery was a combat arm in the U.S. Army. In a reorganization that year, a new Corps of Artillery was created in which coast artillery and field artillery were partially separated. In 1907 there was a complete separation – Coast Artillery Corps and Field Artillery. The coast artillery survived as a branch in the Army until 1950 by which time it had been rendered obsolete by air power, airborne forces, and amphibian landing warfare. Its antiaircraft artillery became the Antiaircraft Command, which was redesignated the U.S. Army Air Defense Command (missiles) in 1957.

commissary – (1) a store or storehouse handling food and merchandise at a military post, camp, or station; (2) an officer at a military post, assigned additional duty as a commissary officer (often called simply the commissary), was in charge of that post's commissary supplies and storehouse. The post commissary sergeant was specially appointed to that duty at a particular post and was the administrative sergeant of the commissary department. He wore distinctive commissary uniform colors and insignia.

Congressional Medal of Honor – see Medal of Honor.

converted rifle – a smoothbore gun, say having a 10-inch bore, into which a sleeve of rifled steel was inserted, converting the weapon to an 8-inch rifle.

corps – (1) a group of personnel with common characteristics, training, and missions, e.g., the Signal Corps, the Corps of Engineers; (2) an army corps, consisting of a corps headquarters, certain reinforcing units, and such divisions as may be assigned to it.

demobilization center – a place where a military force is disbanded, usually the individuals returning to civilian life. (At San Francisco both the Presidio and Angel Island had demobilization centers for the volunteer soldiers returning from the Philippines in 1899.)

dirigible – a lighter-than-air, engine-propelled aircraft capable of being steered in any desired direction. (*Zeppelin* – a rigid airship having a long, cylindrical body supported by internal gas cells.)

disappearing carriage – a gun mount provided for certain types of fixed artillery pieces that raised the piece above a concealing wall or parapet for firing and lowered it again after firing in order to load.

division – a tactical unit that is the smallest composite unit capable of independent, self-supporting operation normally commanded by a major general. Since World War II, the U.S. Army has had infantry divisions, armored divisions, and airborne divisions.

doughboy – an infantryman in World War I.

dragoon – Col. Albert Gallatin Brackett, writing during the Civil War, defined a dragoon in American practice as a sort of hybrid soldier trained to fight both on horseback and on foot. Until 1846 all Regular Army mounted regiments were termed dragoons, there being the 1st and 2d Dragoon Regiments. Congress then created a "Regiment of Mounted Riflemen," and in 1854 added the 1st and 2d Cavalry Regiments. In August 1861 Congress redesignated all five regiments as cavalry. The 1st Dragoons served at the Presidio, and after the Civil War, several cavalry regiments did also. Mounted Riflemen did not serve at the Presidio.

dress parade – a ceremony at which all personnel wore dress or full dress uniforms and were under arms. By 1902 the Army had begun making a distinction between the "dress" uniform and the "full dress" uniform. The Army discontinued both uniforms in 1917 and never resumed issuing them except to bands and ceremonial units. Officers, who bought their own uniforms, continued to buy full dress (and mess dress) uniforms for social functions, and so did some enlisted personnel, generally senior noncommissioned officers who were career soldiers.

electrician sergeant – at the Presidio, a sergeant in charge of and responsible for the maintenance, repair,

and operation of all the electrical machinery and accessories at the coastal defenses. Electrical sergeants were first authorized on April 24, 1899, in heavy (later coast) artillery and had 5-lightning-bolt insignia.

embrasure – an opening in a wall or parapet, in particular, one through which a gun is fired. The fort at Fort Point has many embrasures.

engineers – (1) soldiers trained and employed for engineering duties, including road and bridge building, construction, demolition, surveying, etc., (2) members of the Corps of Engineers.

farrier – a soldier who shod horses and treated their diseases under the control of a veterinary surgeon. In the U.S. Army, one farrier was allowed to each troop of cavalry and each company or battery of light artillery or horse artillery (and beginning in 1901, field artillery).

fatigue (fatigue duty) – any duty performed by a soldier other than military duty or training, especially manual labor.

field grade (field officers) – an officer above a captain and below a brigadier general, i.e., colonel, lieutenant colonel, and major.

general officer – an officer holding a rank above that of colonel, i.e., brigadier general, major general, lieutenant general, general, and general of the army.

general orders – official orders issued in writing by a headquarters that relate to the entire command.

GI – "general issue," a designation of articles issued to soldiers. In World War II and following, it was used to designate a soldier ("GI Joe") and anything connected or relating to soldiers and military service ("GI haircut").

guardhouse – (1) the building occupied by the personnel detailed for sentinel duty; (2) the guardhouse was used also as a prison to confine garrison prisoners. In the 20th century the prison function of the guardhouse came to be called the "stockade."

hospital matron – a woman, often the wife of a soldier, employed by the surgeon to assist in the hospital, do the washing, etc.

hospital steward (hospital sergeant) – a noncommissioned officer under the supervision of the post surgeon whose duties consisted in making up prescriptions, administering medicines, and general supervision of the sick.

infantry – the arm of close combat. Its wartime mission was (is) to take, hold, and secure terrain.

laundresses – camp women, sometimes the wives of soldiers and sometimes not, employed to wash soldiers' clothing. The Army authorized four laundresses to each company. They received rations, bedding straw, and medical care, as well as a set payment for their work. They had official recognition, something that was not accorded to officers' wives. In the 1870s there were 1,316 officially recognized laundresses in the U.S. Army. Although some officers favored the retention of these women, the Army banned their further enrollment in 1878. Those already on the rolls, however, were allowed to continue their work and the Presidio's records continued to make references to them for a few years after 1878. For a brief mention of some remarkable laundresses see Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army, a Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898*, and Patricia Y. Stallard, *Glittering Misery, Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army*.

magazine – a structure where ammunition or explosives are stored.

Medal of Honor – the highest decoration conferred by the United States of America, awarded to a member of the armed services who in action against an enemy, distinguished himself in a conspicuous manner, by gallantry and intrepidity, at the risk of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty and without thereby jeopardizing the success of the mission. Sometimes known as the Congressional Medal of Honor. Established during the Civil War, the Medal of honor remained for decades the only medal awarded to American soldiers, other than marksmanship and campaign badges.

mess – (1) a group of soldiers who take meals together; (2) a meal; (3) to take meals.

mess hall – the place where the enlisted personnel ate.

military reservation (1) land set apart for army purposes; (2) any ground on which a military post or station is located.

militia – Congress passed the basic militia law in 1792 that called for the individual states organizing citizen militias, each militiaman providing his own arms and munitions. The militia, however, was neither disciplined nor well trained. The locally organized companies were quasi-military, quasi-social organizations. In some, the men elected their officers. State governors commissioned the majors and colonels, some competent, some not. In the War of 1812, the militia, on the whole, was undependable, the national government having little control over training and leadership. During the Mexican War, 1846-1847, President James K. Polk was authorized to call for 50,000 volunteers rather than depending on state militias. At the beginning of the Civil War, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln asked the loyal state governors for 75,000 militiamen to serve for three months. Again, some militia regiments were well trained and equipped, others were regiments in name only. At the first Battle of Manassas (Bull Run), the federal force was largely composed of partly trained militia, the battle ending in disaster for them. But the United States fought and won the Civil War with a great volunteer army, not with state militia. As a social involvement, militia units continued to be popular throughout most of the 19th century. An Act of Congress in 1903 revised the Militia Act of 1792. It separated the militia into the Organized Militia, to be known as the National Guard, and the Reserve Militia, both under more stringent state and federal regulations.

Nike – a surface-to-air guided missile. It provided a defense system for American cities and industrial centers in the 1950s and 1960s. In the Bay Area Nike Ajax and the advanced, sometimes nuclear-armed, Nike Hercules were installed. Nike – the Greek goddess of victory.

ordnance – all types of combat weapons, with their ammunition, equipment, and accessories, including repair tools and machinery.

parapet – a low mound or wall to shield and protect personnel from the enemy.

platoon – a unit composed of two or more squads. It is the basic tactical unit, usually commanded by a lieutenant. In the Korean War, an infantry platoon generally consisted of four squads and had about forty men.

post returns – at the Presidio of San Francisco an official account of the reservation prepared as of the last day of each month and forwarded through channels to the War Department. It contained such information as the strength of the garrison by units; and personnel present for duty, sick, extra duty, in arrest, absent, died, etc. A "Remarks" section recorded important activities, visitors, and the receipt of orders from higher headquarters. Officers were listed by name, and their duties were shown; also the officers' status – present, absent, transferred, arrival, etc. The post returns were abolished on December 31, 1916, in favor of the daily morning report.

post trader – a merchant having the exclusive privilege to trade upon the military reserve to which he was appointed. Post traders were replaced by army canteens in 1889 and by post exchanges in 1895.

quartermaster – a regimental or post staff officer, usually with the rank of lieutenant, who looked after the assignment of quarters, the provision of clothing, forage, fuel, and all other quartermaster supplies. The quartermaster generally was detailed as an "assistant quartermaster" (AQM) or as an "acting assistant quartermaster (A.A.Q.M.). The Quartermaster Department provided the quarters and transportation of the Army, buried the dead, and many other duties. Early in World War II the Corps of Engineers assumed responsibility for army construction, and the Transportation Corps became responsible for moving persons and things. At the Presidio, officers' wives always maintained friendly relations with the post quartermaster, the man who could repair and improve their quarters, and so forth.

radar – an electronic radio detection and ranging system that determined the location, speed, and number of water vessels and/or the azimuth, location, height, speed, and number of aircraft. RA in RAdio, D in Detection, A in And, and R in Ranging.

recruit – a newly enlisted member of the Army. After receiving training, he was promoted to private. From 1948 to 1951, a new soldier was a recruit for four months while undergoing basic training. The rank was abolished in 1951.

redoubt – an outlying fortification or a small temporary fort that might have been a detached post or a strong position within a larger fort. It might have had the characteristics of a fort, parapet, ditch, etc. Often hastily constructed.

regiment – an administrative and tactical unit composed of a headquarters and two or more battalions, usually commanded by a colonel. All personnel of a regiment were of the same arm or service. In the 19th century a Regular Army regiment generally had ten or twelve companies of forty to sixty to one hundred men each.

Regular Army – that part of the U.S. Army that is always on active, full-time military duty, i.e., the U.S. Army except the National Guard and the Organized Reserve Corps.

reveille – the bugle call sounded at military posts, camps, etc., at the hour when the troops are supposed to rise, i.e., the Army's wake-up call.

review – a formal inspection or ceremony.

rifling – see smoothbore.

salvo – a group of shots fired simultaneously, or a series of shots fired by a group of guns.

sergeant major – in the 19th century, the highest noncommissioned rank in the Army. In mid-20th century, the noncommissioned officer, usually a master sergeant, acting as chief administrative clerk, assistant to the administrative officer, or adjutant, of a battalion or higher unit.

service – a 20th century term meaning one of those branches of the Army organized, trained, equipped, and employed for supplying, administering, or otherwise supporting the Army and its combat arms; e.g., the Quartermaster Corps, Army Medical Service.

shoran – a precision position-fixing and short range navigation system. (SHOrt RAnge Navigation).

skirmisher – a dismounted individual in a skirmish line.

skirmish line – a line of troops in extended order (spread out) during a tactical exercise or attack.

smoothbore – the bore of the firearm was smooth, i.e., no grooves had been cut into the bore. **Rifling**,

however, meant there were spiral grooves cut into the bore in order to impart a spin to the projectile to increase its accuracy and carrying power.

soapsuds row – nickname of the row of lodgings in which the company laundresses, and enlisted men married to them, lived. Sometimes abbreviated to "suds row." At the Presidio these buildings stood where the brick barracks, 101-105, on Montgomery Street now stand. Others stood near Fort Point.

special orders – written orders issued by a headquarters pertaining to or concerning certain individuals or elements within the command only.

squad – a group of men organized as a team. In the Korean War generally nine or ten men. In combat, 19th or 20th century, could be as few as three or four personnel.

squadron – Army: beginning in 1882 the basic tactical and administrative cavalry unit consisting of a headquarters and two or more troops, comparable to an infantry battalion. Air Force: a headquarters and two or more flights (comparable to companies).

staff corps – a 19th century term that meant, collectively, the non-combat branches of the Army, such as the Adjutant General's Department, the Commissary Department, the Pay Department, the Quartermaster Department, etc.

stockade – Historically, a work in which a palisade of strong and closely-planted timbers constituted the principal defense. In the 20th century, a military jail, such as the one at Fort Winfield Scott. Initially called a guardhouse.

sutler – a trader who sold drink and provisions to the troops. Beginning in 1812, a civilian appointed to serve as the sole licensed merchant operating on a military post or appointed to accompany a regiment in the field during wartime. As a military reform, after the Civil War, post sutlers were discontinued and replaced by the supposedly more carefully regulated post trader, which was in turn replaced in 1889 by the post canteen, and in 1895 by the post exchange (PX).

tactical – pertaining to combat operations or to the employment of units in actual combat.

tattoo – a bugle call sounded at night as a signal that lights will be put out.

trainmaster – a noncommissioned officer in charge of managing a mule or wagon train on the march.

traverse – (1) the movement of a gun on its mount to right or left; (2) a mask of earth or concrete that protects a position or fortification from enfilade fire; (3) to turn a gun to the right or left, pivoted on its mount, in pointing.

troop – beginning in 1882, the administrative and tactical unit of cavalry, analogous to a company in the infantry.

trooper – beginning in 1882, a soldier in the cavalry.

troops – (1) a collective term for uniformed soldiers; (2) beginning in 1882, the new term for companies of cavalry.

Very pistol – a special pistol used to fire pyrotechnic charges (red, white, and green stars in a special code). Invented by Edward W. Very, a naval officer.

volunteer (Volunteers) – militia units of part-time citizen soldiers had so discredited the whole militia concept during the War of 1812, that by the Mexican War the federal government called on state governors to supply newly-organized and trained regiments of volunteers rather than to call up the standing militia. Thus Col. Jonathan D. Stevenson's 7th (later redesignated 1st) New York Volunteer Regiment, the first U.S. soldiers to garrison the Presidio of San Francisco, was a newly organized volunteer regiment. In 1861 President Abraham Lincoln called on the governor of each northern state to supply a specified number of volunteers for a specific period of time. Some of these volunteers from California garrisoned the Presidio. In 1898 President William McKinley called for volunteers, and many volunteer regiments trained at the Presidio of San Francisco before going overseas to the Philippine Islands. By 1917 and American entry into World War I, the National Guard, along with the Officers' and an Enlisted Reserve Corps and a Reserve Officers' Training Corps, replaced both militia and volunteer units as a source of recruiting soldiers, so-called citizen soldiers, outside the Regular Army in wartime or other national emergency.

warrant officer – the Army first created warrant officer ranks in 1918 for officers in the Mine Planter Service who commanded small vessels about the size of a tugboat. In 1920 this rank was extended to personnel in clerical, administration, and band leader positions. Today, warrant officers are found throughout the army. A warrant officer holds his rank by authority of appointment or warrant. Warrant officers rank immediately below second lieutenants and immediately above master and first sergeants. There are four grades: chief warrant officer W-4, chief warrant officer W-3, chief warrant officer W-2, and warrant officer W-1.